

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Defending Freedoms Project Prisoner List

BAHRAIN



1. **Jalila al-Salman (f) and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb (m)** are the former president and vice president of the Bahrain Teacher's Association (BTA). They were arrested with several other board members of the BTA after going on strike. While their colleagues were released, they were brought to trial before a military court on 15 June on charges which include "inciting hatred towards the regime", "calling to overthrow and change the regime by force", "calling on parents not to send their children to school" and "calling on teachers to stop working and participate in strikes and demonstrations". They have been tortured and ill-treated. (UA 227/11) (Amnesty)

BELARUS



1. **Ales Bialiatski (m)**, a prominent Belarusian human rights defender and chair of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, was arrested in central Minsk, Belarus, on 4 August 2011. On 24 November 2011, he was imprisoned for four and a half years on charges of "concealment of income on a large scale". Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience whose detention is politically motivated and intended to obstruct his legitimate work as a human rights defender. Furthermore the trial violated international fair trial standards in several respects. (Amnesty)
UA 240/11)



2. **Anton Suryapin (m)** is a student at Belarus State Journalism School imprisoned for posting online photographs of teddy bears carrying placards in support of freedom of expression. The teddy bear stunt was organized by a Swedish advertising company to draw attention to the repression of freedom of speech in Belarus. The company dropped the parachuted the teddy bears out of an airplane over Belarusian air space. The organizers claim that Suryapin had nothing to do with the stunt and had no

prior knowledge of it. He has been charged with “organizing illegal migration”. He spent a month in prison before he was released on bail. He still faces a sentence of up to 7 years in prison. He was released under bail conditions stating that he cannot leave his home city of Slutsk, south of Minsk, without permission from the KGB, and must not disclose any information in relation to the investigation. (UA 222/12) (Amnesty)

CHINA



1.

Liu Xianbin (DOB: Aug. 25, 1968), a longtime political dissident, organizer of the China Democracy Party, and a member of an “illegal” Protestant house church. He is also a blogger using the pen name Wan Xianming. He is originally from Suining, in southwest China’s Sichuan province. Liu was also one of the original signers of Charter 08 document that called for constitutional reforms, democracy, and human rights, including the freedom of religion and belief. Liu was an active participant in the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy movement. After the protests were suppressed, Liu continued to call for democracy and was arrested by Beijing police on April 15, 1991, and held in Beijing’s infamous Qincheng prison. On Dec. 28, 1992, he was convicted by the Beijing Intermediate People’s Court for “counter-revolutionary incitement” and sentenced to two-years, six-months’ imprisonment, with a one-year deprivation of political rights. Released in October 1993 after serving his full term, Liu was sentenced again by the Suining Intermediate People’s Court to a 13-year prison term for “inciting subversion of state power,” with a three-year deprivation of political rights. He was released on Nov. 6, 2008.

From April 2010 to February 2010, Liu submitted to overseas websites and magazines a number of articles critical of the Chinese Communist authorities on issues ranging from corruption, abuses of power, and human rights violations. On June 28, 2010, Liu was detained, and on March 25, 2011, the Suining Intermediate People’s Court convicted Liu of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced him to a 10-year prison term, with deprivation of political rights for two years, four months. He remains in jail. (USCIRF)



2. **Chen Zhenping (f)** is a Falun Gong practitioner was detained in August 2008 for “using a heretical organization to subvert the law”. She is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence. Repeated attempts by her lawyer to visit her since her detention have all been blocked by the authorities. Her family has not been able to see her since March 2009. She has been subjected to regular beatings, been forcibly injected with drugs and given electric shocks on sensitive parts of her body. She remains at serious risk of further torture or ill-treatment. (Amnesty) (UA 305/08)



3.

Guo Quan (Kwo-kwan): Guo Quan (DOB: May 8, 1968) has been in prison since 2008 under a 10-year sentence for calling for political reform. In 2008, Guo participated in and played a leading role in a campaign to protect the rights of demobilized military officers, published criticism about the government's response to the Sichuan earthquake and about the abuse of laws to violate international human rights. On Nov. 13, 2008, he was taken into custody by Nanjing police, who also raided his home, where Guo and his wife hosted regular Protestant "house church" activities. His family was informed that he was being criminally detained on suspicion of "inciting subversion of state power." On June 10, 2009, Guo's case was recorded on the docket of the Suqian Municipal Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu province, and his trial was held on Aug. 7. On Oct. 16, the court convicted Guo of "subversion of state power" and sentenced him to a 10-year prison term.

An English major who graduated in 1990, Guo was an associate professor and master's program student advisor at Nanjing Normal University's College of Liberal Arts. After graduating from college, Guo worked as an official in a state-owned enterprise, as secretary for the Nanjing government's Economic Restructuring Commission and as a judicial officer in the criminal division of the Nanjing Municipal Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu province. In 1996, he was awarded a master's degree in law from the Nanjing University sociology department. In 1999, he earned a doctorate in Chinese philosophy from the Nanjing University philosophy department. Guo and his wife were also members of an "illegal" Protestant house church. Guo's wife and son fled to the United States on Jan. 23, 2012, where they are appealing for international help in winning his early release. (USCIRF)



4.

Alimujiang Yimiti (a-lim-John Yee-me-tea): Alimujiang (DOB: June 10, 1973) is a Uyghur Christian from Xinjiang now serving a 15-year prison term. His home is in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang, and he and his wife have two young sons. While working at a British agri-food company, Alimujiang was the leader of a house church in the city of Kashgar. On Sept. 13, 2007, the Kashgar Religious Affairs Bureau ruled that "Alimujiang Yimiti since 2002 has illegally engaged in religious infiltration under the guise of work, spreading Christianity among the Uyghur people, distributing Christian propaganda and growing [the number of] Christian believers."

On Jan. 12, 2008, the Kashgar police criminally detained Alimujiang on "suspicion of inciting subversion of state power" and "leaking state secrets overseas." He was formally arrested on those charges after the procuratorate on Feb. 20 approved his arrest. On Sept. 12, 2008, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled in its No. 28 document for 2008 that Alimujiang's arrest and detention had been arbitrary. In a secret trial on Aug. 6, 2009, the Kashgar Intermediate People's

Court sentenced Alimujiang to 15 years' imprisonment for the crime of "leaking state secrets to foreigners" (His trial was deemed a top secret case).

On March 16, 2010, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Higher People's Court, without holding a hearing and barring lawyers from court, upheld the Intermediate Court's sentence, and added a five year deprivation of political rights punishment. (<http://www.chinaaid.org/2011/03/xinjiangs-higher-peoples-court-rejects.html>). (USCIRF)



5. **Pastor Yang Rongli (Young-ring-lee):** Ms. Yang Rongli has been serving a 7-1/2 year prison term since 2009 for leading the 50,000-member Linfen house church in Shaanxi province. Yang was a 1982 graduate of the Linfen Normal College's Chinese department. Because of her excellent academic record, she was retained by the college to teach. She also worked as an editor and reporter. She and her husband Wang Xiaoguang were the leaders of the Jindengtai (Golden Lampstand) Church, a house church in Linfen, Shaanxi province. In 1998, they became the church's full-time clergy, and in the following two decades, the church grew to 50,000 members.

On Sept. 13, 2009 at 3 a.m., the local Fushan county government dispatched more than 400 police officers and plainclothes police, led by government officials, to the meeting site of the Fushan Christians and the Gospel Shoe Factory, where they brutally beat Christians staying in a dormitory. More than 100 people were seriously injured. On Sept. 23, armed police surrounded the main Jindengtai church building, and on Sept. 25, Yang and six other church leaders were arrested while traveling to the provincial capital of Taiyuan to petition the government. On Nov. 25, the Yaodu District Court convicted Yang and her husband of "illegal occupation of farmland" and "gathering a mob to create a traffic disturbance." Yang was sentenced to a seven year prison term and fined 30,000 yuan (US\$4,755); her husband was sentenced to a three year term and fined 10,000 yuan (US\$1,585) (<http://www.chinaaid.org/2011/08/five-linfen-church-leaders-released.html>). (USCIRF)

ERITREA



1. **Eritrean Patriarch Abune Antonios:** In 2006, the government deposed Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch Abune Antonios and placed him under house arrest after he protested the Eritrean Department of Religious Affairs' interference in his church's affairs. In January 2005 the Patriarch's annual Nativity message was not broadcast or televised and the Eritrean Holy Synod met on 6-7 August 2005 with the main purpose of removing all executive authority from the Patriarch. He was allowed to officiate at church services but prohibited from having any administrative rôle in church affairs. Among accusations brought against the Patriarch, were his reluctance to excommunicate 3,000 members of the Medhane Alem, an Orthodox Sunday School movement, and his demands that the government

should release imprisoned Christians accused of treason. In January 2006, he was officially removed from his position as head of the Eritrean Orthodox Church and spiritual leader of more than two million persons and placed under house arrest. On 27 May 2007, the government installed Bishop Dioscoros of Mendefera as the new Patriarch. The same day, Abune Antonios, was forcibly removed from his residence and transported to an undisclosed location. Since then, he has been prevented from communicating with the outside world and reportedly denied medical care. (USCIRF)

ETHIOPIA



1. **Eskinder Nega (m):** Ethiopian journalist arrested on accusations of participating in terrorism-related activities. He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Eskinder was arrested again on 14 September 2011 after publishing a column that criticized both the Ethiopian government's detainment of journalists as suspected terrorists and its arrest of Ethiopian actor and activist [Debebe Eshetu](#). Amnesty believes the charges are politically motivated. Nega is still in jail after a judge in Addis Ababa found him guilty Jan. 23 on terror charges. He could face the death penalty at sentencing. (UA 282/11 and <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-05/D9UGJ5RO0.htm>) (Amnesty)

GAMBIA



1. **Dr Amadou Scattred Janneh (m)**, a Gambian national who also has USA citizenship, was arrested on 7 June 2011 for being in possession of T-shirts made by the NGO 'Coalition for Change - The Gambia' (CCG), which featured the slogan "End to Dictatorship Now" and charged with treason. On 16 January 2012 Dr Amadou Scattred Janneh was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. Dr. Amadou Scattred Janneh is the former Minister of Information and Communication in the Gambian government. He taught for several years as assistant professor at the African & African-American Studies University of Tennessee, Knoxville, US. (Amnesty) UA 190/11)

INDIA



1.

Soni Sodi (f) and Lingaram Kodopi (m) are two Adivasi (Indigenous) activists from the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, Soni Sodi and Lingaram Kodopi, have been arrested on charges of aiding Maoist rebels, who are fighting an armed insurgency against state forces across Central India. However, Amnesty International believes that the charges against them are false and politically motivated, and that Soni Sodi and Lingaram Kodopi are prisoners of conscience as they have been arrested solely for criticizing human rights violations by both Maoists and state forces committed during the armed insurgency. Soni Sodi has alleged that the Chhattisgarh police tortured and sexually assaulted her while she was kept in custody. The police official, she has alleged, forced her out of her cell, stripped her and gave her electric shocks, causing acute pain all over her body, head and spine. This resulted in her inability to walk to the Dantewada court on the afternoon of 10 October. The NRS government medical college hospital in Kolkata, which examined her on 29 November as per a court order, reported back on 14 November that two stones had been inserted in her vagina and one in her rectum, and that she had annular tears in her spine. She has been admitted to a hospital for treatment. (Amnesty)

IRAN



1.

Ayatollah Mohammad Kazemeni Boroujerdi, Shi'a cleric: in October 2006, Ayatollah Mohammad Kazemeni Boroujerdi, who advocates the separation of religion and state and has spoken out on behalf of the rights of Iran's religious minorities as well as those of its Shi'a Muslim majority, was arrested and imprisoned without charge. He and 17 of his followers initially were tried by a special court with jurisdiction over Shi'a clerics, and sentenced to death on spurious charges, including "enmity against God" and spreading propaganda against the regime. After an appeal, the death sentence was withdrawn and Ayatollah Boroujerdi was sentenced to 11 years in prison. Ayatollah Boroujerdi currently is serving his prison term, and the government has banned him from practicing his clerical duties and confiscated his home and belongings. He has suffered physical and mental abuse while in prison. (USCIRF)

2. The Baha'i Seven (USCIRF)



a)

Fariba Kamalabadi: Fariba Kamalabadi, 50, is a developmental psychologist and mother of three who was arrested twice previously because of her involvement with the Baha'i community. On one of those occasions she was held incommunicado for 10 days. As a youth, Mrs. Kamalabadi was denied the opportunity to study at a public university. In her mid-30s, she embarked on an eight-year period of study and ultimately received an advanced degree from the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education, an alternative institution established by the Baha'i community of Iran to serve young people who were barred from university.



b)

Jamaloddin Khanjani: Jamaloddin Khanjani, 80, was a successful factory owner who, because he was Baha'i, lost his business after the 1979 Islamic revolution. Mr. Khanjani's volunteer service to his religious community included membership on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran in 1984, a year that saw four of the nine members executed by the government. Mr. Khanjani was arrested and imprisoned at least three times before this most recent incarceration in 2008. He has four children and six grandchildren. His wife, Ashraf Sobhani, passed away on 10 March 2010, while Mr. Khanjani was still in prison.



c)

Afif Naeimi: Afif Naeimi, 51, is an industrialist who was unable to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor because as a Baha'i he was denied access to university. Born in Yazd, he lived part of his youth with relatives in Jordan after the death of his father. He was long active in volunteer Baha'i service, teaching classes for both children and adults and serving as a member of the Auxiliary Board, an appointed position with the function of inspiring, encouraging, and promoting learning among Baha'is.



d)

Saeid Rezaie: Saeid Rezaie, 54, is an agricultural engineer who has run a successful farming equipment business for more than 20 years. During the early 1980s, when persecution of Baha'is was intense, he moved to northern Iran and worked as a farming manager, then to Kerman to work as a carpenter, in part because of the difficulties Baha'is faced in finding formal employment or operating businesses. Their two daughters, both in their 20s, were among a group of 54 young Baha'is arrested in Shiraz in 2006 while engaged in a project aimed at helping underprivileged young people. In 2006, before his latest incarceration in 2008, Mr. Rezaie was arrested and detained for a period that included 40 days in solitary confinement.



e)

Mahvash Sabet: Mahvash Sabet, 60, is a teacher and school principal who was dismissed from public education for being a Baha'i. Before her arrest, she served for 15 years as director of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, which provides alternative higher education for Baha'i youth. She began her professional career as a teacher and also worked as a principal at several schools. In her professional role, she also collaborated with the National Literacy Committee of Iran. After the Islamic revolution, like thousands of other Iranian Baha'i educators, she was fired from her job and blocked from working in public education.



f)

Behrouz Tavakkoli: Behrouz Tavakkoli, 61, was a social worker who lost his government job in the early 1980s because of his Baha'i belief. Prior to his most recent imprisonment, he experienced intermittent detainment and harassment and, three years ago, was jailed for four months without charge, spending most of that time in solitary confinement and developing serious kidney and orthotic problems. Mr. Tavakkoli was elected to the local Baha'i governing council in Mashhad while a student at the university there and later served on a similar council in Sari before such institutions were banned in the early 1980s.



g)

Vahid Tizfahm: Vahid Tizfahm, 40, is an optometrist and owner of an optical shop in Tabriz, where he lived until early 2008 when he moved to Tehran. He was born and spent his youth in the city of Urumiyyih and went to Tabriz at age 18 to study to become an optician. He later also studied sociology at the Advanced Baha'i Studies Institute, an affiliate of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education. Since his youth, Mr. Tizfahm has served the Baha'i community in a variety of capacities – for a time as a member of the Baha'i National Youth Committee and later as part of the Auxiliary Board, an advisory group that serves to uplift and inspire Baha'i communities.

RUSSIA



1.

Maria Alekhina (f), Ekaterina Samutsevich (f) and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (f) are members of the feminist punk rock collective known as Pussy Riot. They were arrested after performing a protest song in Moscow's Christ the Savior cathedral calling on the Virgin Mary to become a feminist and banish Putin. They were convicted of "hooliganism, pre-planned and committed by a group of people on grounds of religious hatred" and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment at a penal camp. The lawyers for the three women will appeal against the sentence. While the appeal is pending, the three women will remain in pre-trial detention, where they have already spent almost six months. The police have also issued a statement that two other members of Pussy Riot, who also participated in the February action, are on the "wanted list" and there is a separate criminal case against them. (UA 122/12) (Amnesty and USCIRF)

SAUDI ARABIA



1.

Hamza Kashgari, Saudi writer and blogger: In February 2012, after receiving numerous death threats, Hamza Kashgari, a 23-year old Saudi blogger, fled from Saudi Arabia to Malaysia amid possible apostasy and blasphemy charges for comments deemed as insulting the Prophet Mohammad that he posted on Twitter. After a few days, Malaysian authorities deported him back to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's highest official clerics have declared Kashgari guilty of apostasy based on his now-deleted tweets and called for him to be put to death. He remains in detention in Jeddah awaiting formal charges and a trial. (USCIRF)



2. **Khaled al-Johani (m)**, Saudi Arabian teacher, was arrested after an interview with BBC Arabic during which he spoke about the lack of freedoms in Saudi Arabia. He was apparently the sole protester who reached the location of the planned demonstration due to the heavy security presence on the day. He is said to have refused an offer of a state-appointed lawyer, asking instead for a lawyer of his own choosing, which he was initially denied. After nearly a year in detention, his trial began. The court adjourned and allowed him to appoint a lawyer of his choice for the first time, over 11 months after his arrest. His trial is still underway. He has been on hunger-strike since June 10. (Amnesty) (Portfolio: picture: <http://www.shafaqna.com/english/component/k2/item/430-amnesty-calls-on-saudi-arabia-to-release-detained-teacher.html> and UA 59/12)

UZBEKISTAN



1. **Hairulla Khamidov, journalist:** In January 2010, a young Uzbek Muslim journalist, Hairulla Khamidov, was arrested in Tashkent and charged with membership in an alleged extremist group. A police search of his home found recordings of sermons by the independent Muslim clerics mentioned above. Many believe that Khamidov was targeted because of his popular religious program on a private radio station. In May 2010, Khamidov received a six-year prison camp sentence. (USCIRF)
2. **Mehriniso Hamdamova, Zulkhumor Hamdamova, and Shahlo Rakhmonova:** Three Uzbek women were convicted in April 2010 on criminal charges of threatening the constitutional order, public security, and public order because they had conducted the private religious instruction of girls. Mehriniso Hamdamova, a teacher at an officially-approved women's religion course at Karshi's Kuk Gumbaz Mosque, was sentenced to seven years in a prison camp; her sister Zulkhumor Hamdamova and their relative Shahlo Rakhmonova each received six and a half year terms. (USCIRF)

VIETNAM



1. **Nguyen Van Lia** is a scholar in Hoa Hao Buddhism, a sect which has been repressed by authorities. According to state media, he possessed printed materials and CDs and DVDs criticizing the

Vietnamese government's religious record. He had previously met in Saigon with the US Consulate and the USCIRF. (USCIRF)

Details: Age: 71 years old; **Activity:** Hoa Hao Buddhism scholar; Date of arrest: April 24, 2011; Sentence: Sentenced to 5 years imprisonment on December 13, 2011; Charge: Abusing democratic freedoms (Article 258); Current location: An Giang Province



2. **Tran Hoai An** is a religious freedom advocate and a member of the Hoa Hao Buddhist church, a sect which has been repressed by authorities. According to state media, he was arrested for possessing printed materials and CDs and DVDs criticizing the government's religious policies. (USCIRF)

Details: Age: 60 years old; Activity: Religious freedom advocate; Date of arrest: July 2, 2011; Sentence: Sentenced to 3 years imprisonment on December 13, 2011; Charge: Abusing democratic freedoms (Article 258); Current location: An Giang Province



3. **Nguyen Trung Ton** is a leader of a Pentecostal house church. As a result of his evangelical work and advocacy for dispossessed farmers, Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton has often been harassed and even beaten by security police. He is a signatory of the Bloc 8406 Democracy Movement manifesto. He was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment followed by 2 years house arrest on December 29, 2011. (USCIRF)

Details: Birth date: 1971; Activity: Pastor in the Full Gospel Church;; Date of arrest: November 15, 2011; Sentence: Sentenced to 2 years imprisonment followed by 2 years house arrest on December 29, 2011; Charge: Propaganda against the socialist state (Article 88); Current location: Nghe An Province



4. **Cu Huy Ha Vu** is a prominent government critic and human rights lawyer. He filed unprecedented lawsuits against the government—including suing Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for violating laws on environmental protection, national security and cultural heritage by approving a Chinese-run bauxite mining project in the Central Highlands. His law firm provided legal assistance to democracy activists and, prior to his arrest, to six Catholics from Con Dau parish who had protested government confiscation of Church properties. (USCIRF)

Details: Birth date: December 2, 1957; Activity: Human rights lawyer; Date of arrest: November 5, 2010; Sentence: Sentenced to 7 years imprisonment followed by 3 years house arrest on April 4, 2011; Charge: Propaganda against the socialist state (Article 88); Current location: Prison Camp 5, Thanh Hoa Province



5.

Pastor Duong Kim Khai Duong is a pastor for the Mennonite Church in Vietnam, a long time advocate for aggrieved farmers, a democracy activist, and member of Viet Tan. Since the early 1990s, he has been detained or arrested 13 times, often while trying to organize prayer sessions. He was jailed in 2004 for starting an “illegal” religious group. Upon his release in 2006, he founded the Mennonite Cattle Shed Congregation, to advocate for religious freedom and social justice, particularly providing assistance so that farmers could petition the government for redress in land disputes or corruption cases in Ben Tre and Dong Thap provinces. He also joined the democracy advocacy organization Viettan during this period. Pastor Duong Kim Khai was arrested on August 10, 2010 under Article 79 of the Vietnamese penal code. The condition of his health and place of detention was kept from his family by authorities until October 12, 2010 when his family received written confirmation of his arrest. In 2011, the [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) ruled that the Hanoi government’s detention and conviction of Duong Kim Khai and 6 other land activists is in violation of international law. (USCIRF)

Details: Birth date: June 17, 1958; Activity: Pastor in the Mennonite Church, land rights activist; Date of arrest: August 16, 2010; Sentence: Sentenced to 6 years imprisonment (later reduced to 5 years) followed by 5 years house arrest on May 30, 2011; Charge: Attempting to overthrow the government (Article 79); Current location: Xuan Loc Prison, Dong Nai province. (USCIRF)



6.

Paulus Le Son is a community organizer and prominent writer for Vietnam Redemptorist News (VRNs). A resident of Hanoi, he is an active community organizer for issues such as HIV, public education, and serves as member of the John Paul II Group for Pro-Life. His popular personal blog covers issues of social justice, human rights and sovereignty. He was arrested as part of larger crackdown currently totaling 17 human rights defenders (mostly from Vinh Province.) (USCIRF)

Details: Birth date: October 10, 1985; Activity: Blogger, social activist; Date of arrest: August 3, 2011; Sentence: Detained without trial; Charge: Attempting to overthrow the government (Article 79); Current location: B14 Detention Center, Hanoi